



Chef Charles Says...

A newsletter for congregate meal participants for the month of July

Chef Charles Club is defined as a group of people who meet with a leader or instructor to learn and discuss how nutrition and physical activity can make a difference in their lives. Participants receive a monthly Chef Charles newsletter from the instructor.

The survey data we collect from Chef Charles participants tells us that instructors do make a difference. For example, in 2009 Chef Charles focused on encouraging participants to eat more fruits and veggies. Chef Charles Club members who participated in activities reported eating more fruits and veggies at meals (56%) and snacks (50%) while those who **just read** the newsletter alone reported more produce consumption at meals (40%) and snacks (39%). While both groups were eating more fruits and veggies, those with an instructor made a bigger change. The time you spend preparing for a Chef Charles Club is valuable for the health of your participants. **Thank you.**

The June, July and August Chef Charles newsletters will focus on the sodium in our food. There has been renewed public attention on sodium consumption and its adverse effects on health due in part to a recent report on sodium intake from The Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies.

High blood pressure (hypertension) affects about one in three adults in the United States and can lead to coronary heart disease, stroke, heart failure, kidney failure, and other health problems. Decades of research published in peer-reviewed journals have established high sodium intake as an important cause of high blood pressure. In addition, several research studies have clearly demonstrated that reducing the amount of sodium in one's diet can significantly lower blood pressure and can help safely prevent or control high blood pressure. You will have the opportunity to help Chef Charles participants change their salt habit.

Chef Charles is concerned that many older adults who are eligible are not participating in the Food Stamp Program. It is now called SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program); in Iowa the program is called Food Assistance. As an instructor for Chef Charles you can help those in your club understand that the SNAP program can make a big difference in their food budget. **The Food Safety article gives you an opportunity to discuss using SNAP coupons to purchase fruits and vegetables at local farmer's markets and handling them safely.** Other activities you can do include:

- Invite a Department of Human Services Staff member to your site to talk about the Food Assistance program.
- Bookmark www.benefitscheckup.org on site computers for participants to visit.
- Remind participants that the EBT cards are handy to use at local stores for food purchases. Many of the farmers' markets also take EBT cards.



- Encourage participants to apply on-line for Food Assistance www.yesfood.iowa.gov.

We encourage you to use the questions at the end of the instructor's guide. This provides feedback to us regarding the success of the Chef Charles program in helping participants to eat healthier, be more active and have safe food. Ask your group the questions at the beginning of your Chef Charles meeting and then again at the end. This will reinforce key points and identify if the participants know the answers.

Get The News

Props:

- 12 straws

Balancing Sodium and Potassium

Eating more potassium works in concert with a low-sodium diet to lower blood pressure. Potassium is essential not only for heart health, but for the skeletal and muscle systems as well. The balance or ratio that your body maintains is about **three parts potassium and one part sodium**. Eating too much sodium in your diet may increase your need for potassium.

Controlling sodium/salt intake can help prevent fluid retention and prevent or control high blood pressure. Another way to lower blood pressure is to consume a diet rich in potassium. The recommended intake of potassium for adults is 4,700 mg per day or 1566 mg per meal. (This is the amount in an average meal served at a congregate site.) Potassium should come from food sources. **Potassium-rich fruits and vegetables include leafy green vegetables, fruit from vines, and root vegetables.** Meat, milk, and cereal products also contain potassium.

Activity

Say to the group: We have talked about the importance of including potassium-rich foods in our diet. What are some foods that are good sources of potassium? *Answer: fruits and vegetables.*

We also identified that our target for sodium is 1500 mg a day. Keep in mind that you are also getting sodium from food. In addition to including both sodium and potassium in our diet, we need to keep them balanced. The balance we need is three parts of potassium for one part of sodium. I have in front of me straws to represent sodium and potassium. To be balanced, my one straw of salt would need how many straws of potassium? *Answer: three.*

Now if one straw is equal to 500 mg of sodium, how many straws can we consume to equal our recommended daily intake? *Answer: three straws=1500 mg sodium.*

And how many potassium straws do we need to 'balance'? *Answer: nine straws=4700mg potassium.*

Now let's say that we do not focus on eating potassium rich food like fruits and vegetables, but we continue to consume more than



1500 mg of sodium. What can be the consequence? *Answer: High blood pressure.* If we consume the recommended potassium or even more, we maintain the balance and lower blood pressure as well. This is another reason for eating more fruits and vegetables. Did you know that the average meal at congregate meals has 1566 mg of potassium and less than 1000 mg sodium? That is a good start on balancing your sodium and potassium.

Pick a Better...

Props:

- Highlighted items

Low Sodium Diet

Rinse canned foods like canned tuna, vegetables and other foods to wash away salt. For example, a half cup of canned beans contains about 350 to 500 mg of sodium. Draining and rinsing beans will cut that by about one third. If you buy reduced -sodium beans make sure to rinse them as well to remove the sodium. Dry beans that you soak have little sodium.

- Choose fresh foods whenever possible. Food processing almost always boosts sodium. For example, a medium plain baked potato contains about 20 mg of sodium, while a medium serving of French fries has about 10 times the sodium, and a cup of potatoes au gratin from dry mix has 50 times the sodium. **Medium potato, picture or empty container of French fries**
- Read labels to compare the amount of sodium. Remember that reduced-fat foods, such as low-fat cheese, often have more sodium than the regular. Low-fat cheese package and regular cheese package
- Cook from scratch at home and cut back on salt added to dishes while cooking and at the table. **Salt shaker**
- Limit processed snack foods. **Potato chip package**
- Reduce the use of condiments like soy sauce, dressings, mustards and sauces like barbeque and tartar sauce.
- Limit the use of cured, processed meats like ham and luncheon meats. **Examples of condiments**
- Taste for saltiness when you cook. Be sure to sample a large enough portion to cover the middle and sides of the tongue. The tip of the tongue is less sensitive. Also be sure to cool the bite before tasting, as high heat will dull taste buds. **Spoon**
- Select herbs such as basil, chives, parsley, dill, oregano, sage, mint, thyme, ginger and tarragon. Most herbs are best fresh, but some herbs are also good dried and all add flavor and color. **One container of an herb**
- Include spices such as black pepper, paprika, turmeric,



cumin and cinnamon. Find your favorites and buy high-quality, fresh spices with an aroma that pleases you. **One container of a spice**

- Squeeze the juice of a lemon or lime over baked chicken or a pot of vegetable soup to enhance flavor. **Lemon**
- Enjoy garlic, fresh roasted or sautéed. **Garlic**
- Try making salad dressings by following this formula:
- Two-thirds oil
 - One-third flavored vinegar like balsamic vinegar
 - A tiny amount of sweetness like honey
 - Fresh herbs
- Some dishes don't need salt at all. Dishes that contain aged cheeses and salty ingredients usually have more than enough salt already.

Activity

Note to instructor: You do not have to have each one of the suggested props for this article. Just pick what you have available. People who learn by watching will remember the point more if they have a visual.

Say to the group: There are many ways to lower the sodium in your daily diet when you are doing the preparation. Chef Charles has listed many in this article. I will share the first one.

Read or summarize the importance of rinsing canned foods to lower the sodium content. Ask Chef Charles participants to read one idea, show the prop if available, and give a personal experience to demonstrate the idea.

Chef Charles Asks the Questions

Props:

- 4 nutrition facts labels (need to print)

How do I keep my sodium below 1500 mg a day?

Read the Nutrition Facts Label and look for sodium. Look for products that have no more than 140 mg of sodium per serving, the amount that is considered 'low sodium' by the FDA. And stick with the recommended serving size.

Consume no more than one food a day containing 480 mg of sodium or more per serving, the limit FDA allows on foods labeled as 'healthy.'

Have a congregate meal which contains less than 1000 mg as your main meal for the day.

Activity

Say to the group: I need four volunteers to help read some sample Nutrition Facts Labels. *Give one label to each volunteer.* Ask a participant to look at the article and tell us what defines low-



Labels:

7 mg sodium = ½ cup fresh green beans
299 mg sodium = 1/2 cup canned green beans, drained
409 mg sodium = 1/2 cup canned green beans, not drained
836 mg sodium = 1 cup packaged scalloped potatoes

sodium? *Answer: no more than 140 mg sodium.*

Ask volunteers which label fits this description? *Answer: 7mg fresh green beans.*

Ask a participant what defines healthy sodium choices? *Answer: Less than 480 mg for one serving.*

Which label exceeds 480 mg? *Answer: 836 mg from 1 cup of packaged scalloped potatoes.*

Now let's look at the two labels for canned green beans. Why is one low in sodium while the other is high? *Answer: the beans with less sodium are fresh and not processed.* Rinsing canned vegetables before cooking does help to lower the sodium content. Frozen vegetables have less sodium than canned, but more sodium than fresh.

And one last thing to remember. The Nutrition Facts Label provides nutrition information including sodium content for one serving. If you eat more than one serving, you will be consuming more sodium.



Be Active

Props:

- Large t-shirt
- Glass with water
- Watch

Activity

Stay Cool When You Work Outdoors

Heat stroke is the most severe type of heat exhaustion, often resulting from exercise or heavy exertion in hot environments combined with inadequate fluid intake. If you work outdoors in hot weather, it is important to know how to reduce your risk of heat stroke.

- Wear loose fitting, lightweight, light-colored clothing. **Large t-shirt**
- Drink plenty of fluids, even if you are not thirsty. A good rule is to drink two to four 8-ounce glasses of cool fluids each hour. **Glass with water**
- Avoid drinking alcohol or sugary drinks.
- Rest frequently in a cool spot.
- If possible, work with a buddy so you can monitor each other for signs of heat stress, such as heavy sweating or a rapid pulse.
- Plan your outdoor work early in the day, before 10 a.m. **Watch**

Ask the group: Have you ever experienced heat stress? If you have, you know it is serious. A little planning can make the difference. Share the ways to reduce the risk of heat-induced illnesses. Drinking water can help with the risk of heat stress. Drinking water even before you feel thirsty will help you stay hydrated.

Food Safety

Props:

- Incentive vegetable brush
- Soap
- Glass of water

Basics for Fruits and Vegetables

Your goal is to eat more fruits and vegetables daily. Handling produce to minimize your risk of food borne illness is important.

Remember to:

- Carefully select fresh fruits and vegetables. When shopping, look for produce that is not damaged or bruised and make sure that pre-cut produce is refrigerated or surrounded by ice.
- Clean all surfaces and utensils that will come in contact with the produce. Use soap and hot water to clean cutting boards, peelers, and counter tops.
- Wash hands with soap and warm water.
- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables. All produce should be cleaned under running water even if you are not eating the skin. This step removes dirt or bacteria. Remove the outer leaves of leafy vegetables such as lettuce and cabbage



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before washing. Produce with firm skin, such as potatoes, may require rubbing with a vegetable brush while rinsing under clean running water to remove soil.

- Packaged produce labeled "ready to eat," "pre-washed," or "triple-washed" are safe to eat without washing.
- Dry fruits and vegetables with a clean paper towel.

Activity

Say to the group: Our newsletter has an article on how to handle fresh produce after we buy it. Let's look at the directions. Have volunteers read bullets and discuss. Hand out incentive.

August is peak Farmer's Market time. Make sure to use your Area Agency on Aging coupons to buy fresh Iowa fruits and vegetables. Many Farmer's Markets accept Iowa Food Assistance EBT cards.



Snacks

Teaching Points:

- Great treat for you and your grandchild.
- Food safety is the first step; wash melon before cutting
- Watermelon freezes well because of high water content.
- Great source of potassium 1 cup=173 mg potassium.
- Only 2 mg sodium

Pick a better snack



Watermelon Pops

- Wash watermelon under running water.
- Cut watermelon into 1" X 4" sticks.
- Insert a coffee stirrer, plastic spoon/fork or popsicle stick into a stick of watermelon.
- Place on cookie sheet to freeze.
- Once frozen, remove from sheet, place in plastic bag and store in freezer.

Note to educator: If hot weather makes it difficult to transport the pops, and if the site has a freezer on-site, plan to make the watermelon pops at the site. Freeze and enjoy the snack the next day.

Recipes

Teaching Points:

- This recipe is made for summer time. Select fresh zucchini, onions and tomatoes from your garden or the farmer's market.
- Great source of potassium and low in sodium with great flavor.
- No olive oil? Just substitute vegetable oil.
- Use garlic powder not salt for flavor without added sodium.

Italian Zucchini

Zucchini and tomatoes make a great side dish with grilled chicken. You can use no salt added canned tomatoes, but fresh ones add a lot of flavor.

2 medium zucchini (3 ½ cups)
 1 tablespoon olive oil
 ½ cup onion, chopped
 ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
 ¼ teaspoon black pepper
 ¼ teaspoon oregano
 1 cup tomatoes, chopped

Cut zucchini in half lengthwise, then each half into thirds crosswise. Heat oil in a skillet. Add zucchini, cut-side down and cook until lightly browned. Add onion and seasonings. Top with tomatoes. Cover and cook over medium heat until squash and onion are tender and sauce is slightly thickened. Makes three servings.

85 calories; total fat 5 gm; 19 mg sodium; 555 mg potassium; 10g carbohydrate; 3 g fiber; 3g protein; 166mcg folate



Did You Learn Any New Ideas?

1. What is the ratio balance recommended between potassium and sodium?
2. Rinsing canned vegetables before serving can reduce sodium content by how much?
3. How do you keep sodium in your diet lower than 1500 mg?
4. Plan to do outside work before this time in the summer to reduce your risk of heat exhaustion.
5. When should you use a vegetable brush?

Your Answers

Order Your Materials (provided to Iowa Nutrition Network Partners Only)

Contact Name

Congregate Meal Site

Address

City, State and Zip

Phone Number

Month	# Newsletters	# Incentives
July 2010	_____ Congregate Meal Site Participants	The incentive for July is a vegetable brush Please indicate how many are needed: _____

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Your Answers

3 to 1
One-third
Read Nutrition Fact Labels
10 a.m.
Vegetables with firm skin

Chef Charles Says...

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